

Who Must Go? Permanent Government vs. the People. “Electoral Politics” and “The Deep State”

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President Kennedy was furious at the CIA for having misled him. Waiting several months before he compelled CIA Director Allen Dulles to resign, Kennedy told him,

“Under a parliamentary system of government it is I who would be leaving. But under our system it is you who must go.”

Thus John F. Kennedy defended the illusion that the Anglophile dominated US government had transcended its British aristocratic-monarchical roots.



President John F. Kennedy with CIA Director Allen Dulles and Director-designate John McCone on September 27, 1961. Photo credit: Robert Knudsen. White House Photographs. John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum, Boston

Allen Dulles resigned from his office as Director of Central Intelligence to preside over the committee that would disprove Kennedy's naive belief in an American system of responsible government in the hands of popularly elected representatives.



A Conservative friend of the Thatcher regime in Great Britain created a series called *"Yes Minister"* (with a sequel *"Yes Prime Minister"*) in which the power of the permanent civil service over elected parliamentary government was lampooned.

Yet behind the sarcasm with which Sir Humphrey exhibits his scarcely concealed contempt for the "barbarians" - meaning His Majesty's ordinary subjects- lies the admission of

simplicity in what has been recently called the “Deep State”.

Denied by most in the West, the existence of what Prouty called “the secret team” is so obvious to the scriptwriters of the aristocratic-monarchist British Broadcasting Corporation that it could be advertised in prime time. The history of the current regime in the Federal Republic of Germany, ignored by most of occupied Germany’s licensed “free media”, was so obvious that GDR prime time TV broadcast a series in the 1970s which dramatized the US-Nazi cooperation in the remilitarization of Germany (west) to fight the war now actually impending against Russia.

Das Unsichtbare Visier told the story of secret rearmament using the core of the SS and reliable Wehrmacht officers and the use of CIA *Gladio* operations to create pseudo-Left terrorism in the strategy of tension against the nominally legal Left in the NATO-occupied countries.

The best the US could do was *House of Cards*, which follows the Dallas template with some cynical steroids.

However while the British and the GDR series admit this is a system, the US version is unable to transcend celebrity and the superficiality of daytime soap operas.

All three series were devised as entertainment. They therefore have aesthetic attributes, which permit the viewer to suspend belief. However the difference in context is remarkable.

While the GDR version fictionalizes history and the British version reeks of the smugness in the senior common room, Americans at their most cynical cannot transcend the *Disneyland/Leave it to Beaver* (even if Beaver now would be a trannie) exceptionalism by which only the individual is good or bad. Despite the candid asides and opportunism of the players, the story is always about corruption. The politicians are dishonest and greedy for wealth and power. But so is everyone else. *House of Cards* conceals the interests of power inherent in the system by making all the participants sinners with varying degrees of indulgence and grace. The clever are the elect (or elected). Calvinism is affirmed.



While I was searching for Kennedy's words to Allen Dulles (not knowing who would have recorded the original exchange), I listened to some of Kennedy's press conferences. I can recommend them highly.

They are remarkable for their studied candour, lacking that vacuous, manipulative staging by the handlers of subsequent POTUS. John F Kennedy campaigned among other things on alleged indicators of US weakness in comparison to the Soviet Union- the so-called missile gap.

This persisted in his speeches about the space program. However as POTUS he also implied the Soviet Union or the communist countries were ahead of the US in social welfare. In his 21 April 1961 press conference he replied to a question by saying not that the US was better or more successful than the USSR but that he believed it was "more durable".

At this point one could have asked what virtue lies in a durable yet inferior system? Needless to say this question was not asked. Sixty years after his assassination the US system has proven resilient and reactionary. Despite almost quadrennial changes in the executive branch the resilience of the Reaction continues to amaze while innumerable analysts draft obituaries for the expected demise of the great empire. Meanwhile long-term rises in living standards are only found among the enemies (Russia and China).

To put this in perspective the Soviet Union accomplished the equivalent of two industrialisation phases between 1917 and 1962 (45 years) despite a world war, civil war, foreign invasion and "cold war" that lasted from 1910 until 1989.

All that was accomplished based on domestic resources.

China accomplished similar development between 1949 and 1989.

The US required a century with African and Chinese slave labour, the extermination of a whole continent of indigenous people and some 182 wars fought to dominate the Western hemisphere. Russia and China out produce the US quantitatively and qualitatively despite

latter having the highest armaments expenditure in the world.

Clearly durability does not translate into human welfare. Kennedy was oblique but somehow aware that the US system would be durably unattractive if something essential did not change in the country whose chief executive he had become.

The press conferences reveal a man who knew how the formal machinery of Congress worked but seemed oblivious to the operation of government itself. His hesitancy and caution betrayed that novice status. One need only compare him to Lyndon Johnson, Dwight Eisenhower or Richard Nixon. His seniors in the business all clearly understood how precarious elected office was. Eisenhower's farewell may not have been cynical but it suggested that there was a choice between elected government and the permanent state. As a career Army officer he must have known that no later than the machinations that made Truman the new tenant in the White House the POTUS had become a cupid doll for the cultic rituals of entrenched power. The patriotic (loyal) opposition chronically overvalue this speech.

If one believes the government is only corrupt- although that is bad enough- then it is very tempting to believe that if only the right, honest people get elected then change or even salvation is in sight. However if one begins with the questions what do ordinary people need to live decent lives? And how are those needs satisfied?

Then the constant threat that those needs will not be met can be openly addressed. Instead of abstract, negative freedom (Isaiah Berlin) where one is more or less free to sleep under bridges in default of eternal debts, one might judge a government by its willingness to spend maybe half of what it appropriates for killing people to keeping people alive. Then with such a modest proposal one might assess the willingness and ability of one's government to facilitate well-being for all instead of deliberately preventing it. That could lead to questions about who makes decisions if not the elected representatives (sometimes pretending to be leaders)?

Until the mid-19th century the US had no permanent civil service like the British had developed. In history books one can read deprecatory discussions of the "spoils system". Whenever there was a change in elected office, the new officer or his party exercised patronage privilege to hire and fire the civil servants to fit the taste or priorities of the incoming officeholders. Even letter carriers and secretaries owed their posts to the officeholder's pleasure.

In the Reform Era leading into the 20th century the US adopted a competitive civil service system with permanent appointment regardless of party. The only posts that remained discretionary were cabinet-level and those subject to Senate confirmation.

This rational improvement and professionalization was intended to give daily government and administration quality and efficiency. However it also created a class of officials whose primary interest was career promotion and not professional implementation of government policy. The very security which was to keep them out of politics created a political subculture insulated from expressions of the popular will. This clerical caste operated like its cultural predecessors in the Latin clergy. The prelates, i.e. cabinet officials and agency directors relied on the senior and ambitious junior civil servants to implement policy but also to defend ministerial/ cabinet secretary turf. While the British filled these ranks from the aristocratic families, new and old, the Americans filled these preferments from the

plutocracy. Thus the civil service was socially reproduced like the British service with the US equivalent of titled privilege.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. was not the first to call attention to industry “capture” of the regulatory agencies. As serious and justified as that critique is it misses the class component of capture entirely. The “revolving door” which amplifies “capture” is not merely corruption.

It is a direct reflection of how the American class system works.

There is no better head of NIH or Dr Anthony Fauci’s fief just waiting for an honest selection to confirm his appointment.

The DIE dogma is not a solution but a further obfuscation of the problem.

There is no “better CIA” or “cleaner FBI” any more than there was a better Inquisition or Gestapo to be had. Philip Agee was clear about that point, as was David Atlee Phillips.

Moshe Lewin in his discussion of the eternally maligned Soviet government under Joseph Stalin (*The Making of the Soviet System*, 1994) pointed out that from the start of the October Revolution the Soviet Union was dependent on the vast majority of Tsarist civil and military servants simply because there were never enough educated Communist cadre to fill all the administrative positions for the vast Russian territory. This Tsarist civil service was even more rigid than those of the “modern” Western states. The only way to change policy was to change personnel.

Hence throughout the Stalin era the so-called purges were mainly the punishing or serial replacement of recalcitrant and entrenched bureaucrats with those schooled and tested to enforce the new policies. The bulk of those purged according to Lewin were CPSU cadre and functionaries. Aggravated by war, the Politburo had few direct ways to communicate policy and assure its implementation—using one bureaucracy against the rest. Such periodic “draining of the swamp” is illusory especially in countries like the US, Great Britain and France where the senior civil service is entirely dominated by the ruling class and its aristocratic-corporate cadre.



The term “deep state”, an expression Peter Dale Scott (image left) used to describe the “continuity of government” apparatus that expanded massively

under Ronald Reagan, is a meaningful cliché. In increasingly common parlance it directs us to the failure of electoral politics as a means of democratic social management.

Electoral politics is in fact a strategy applied by the ruling oligarchy through the permanent state apparatus to manage the population.

However it is not something mysterious, secret or transcendental.

The term has arisen to poorly substitute for a term and concept still prohibited in serious political action, namely class power. Perhaps the last American to seriously describe this phenomenon both empirically and theoretically was the renegade sociologist C Wright Mills. Mills called it the "power elite".

Today that insight has been distorted beyond recognition by obsession first with the "rich and famous" and then celebrity. In fact the genre "reality TV" is the paramount vulgarization of the concept.

That a former and aspirant POTUS enjoys such celebrity also shows the impact of fantasy on the political unconscious.

The term „deep state“ is a weak if concerted attempt to reformulate the question: if the people as electors have no power, then who does? Call it a class or the "power elite" or as George Carlin said *the big club- and you ain't in it. And it's also the club they beat you with...* till your own deep state is six feet underground.

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